22 July 1644

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A SERMON CONCERNING SVVEARING,

Preached before the King's MAIESTY, In Christ-Church *Oxon*; *May* the 12. 1644.

By *W. Strode* Dr of *Divinity*.

Published by His MAJESTIES Command.

OXFORD,

Printed by LEONARD LICHFIELD, *Printer to the Vniversity*. 1644.

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MAT. 5. 37.

But let your Communication be yea yea, and nay nay; for whatsoever is more then these commeth of Evill.

AS in the Order of a Common wealth, so in that of the Universe, the Priority of Duty belongs to the Supreame Head, then a subordinate proportion to our Fellow members. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart*, this is the great Command; *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy selfe*, this is but like unto it: the first Table exceedes the second as well in weight as in words, becaufe the higher Object gives it the heavier scale. And in duties of the first Table, Aw of Gods holy Name is not the least: these three, *Fidelity*, *Reverence*, and *Service*, doe summe up the whole draft of divine worship; the first hath reference to his *sole Substance*, the second to his *holy Name*, the third to the circumstance of his *Publick worship*: next to his *Nature* is his *Name*, which followes it as the shadow waites on the Body. Wherefore the *Order*, in which the Reverence of his Name is rank'd, declares the weight of the *Duty*. And

this I premiſe to raiſe a more awfull attention to the words of my Text; as directly ayming at the obſervance thereof. *Let your Communication be yea yea, and nay nay; for whatſoever is more then theſe commeth of Evill.*

Herein I propoſe to your Conſideration three notions. 1. A ſilent toleration of an Oath in caſe of neceſſity, becauſe the caſe here put is not *neceſſary* but *common*. 2. An expreſſe Limitation of our words in Communication or common Talke, *Let your Communication be yea yea, nay nay, no more*. 3. A reaſon of ſuch Limitation, becauſe *whatſoever is more then theſe commeth of Evill*. Briefly thus; how an Oath may be uſed, how not, and why not; theſe are the Parts.

Firſt, in caſes of neceſſity an Oath is tolerable; for what is an Oath, but *the calling of God to witneſſe, for deciſion of doubtfull matters which otherwiſe cannot be made evident*; ſo *Philo* defines it, to be ὄρκος ἐστὶ θεοῦ μαρτυρία ἀμφιβόλου πράγματος, the Teſtimony of God in a matter doubtfull. *Scientiall Propoſitions* are confirm'd by *Reaſon*, *particular Contingents* meerly by *Teſtimony*: as it is ridiculous to prove a generall Propoſition by an Oath, ſo it is vaine to prove a particular Fact by Reaſon. Now humane Teſtimony is oftentimes ſo thin and weake, that it cannot evidence the Truth; both becauſe on the Speakers part there is *aptneſſe of Lying*, and alſo on the Hearers a *hardneſſe of Beliefe*; a weake Eye cannot penetrate a deceitfull heart. Therefore to ſupply theſe defects, ſlippery *Mendacity* and ignorant *Incredulity*, man in weighty matters knowes not whither to flye, but onely to *divine teſtimony*; and ſo by an Oath calls him to witneſſe, whoſe Knowledge is univerſall, whoſe Truth infallible, whereby he can neither be deceived, nor deceive others. This is [illegible]

[illegible] (according to *Precepium*) the last and most certaine pawne of Credit.

In case of Exigence we may use this Pawne under diuers formes, an Oath *Assertory* of things past or present, an Oath *Promissory* of things to come; And each of them may be utter'd either by *simple Attestation* seeming to call God only as a *witnesse*, or by *Execration and Cursing* conditionally added upon our selves, when he is call'd as *Iudge* too: and so againe either by citing Gods *owne* Name, or his *Creatures* wherein His Majesty and Truth appeares; as the principall parts of Nature, the meanes of Redemption, instruments of Grace, Gospells, Sacraments, and the like. Our Saviour in the words before my Text hath reduc'd all Oathes by what creature soever, high or low, great or small, Naturall or Artificiall, without or within us, to God their Author and Ruler, present and powerfull in them; wherefore being so refer'd in his action, they ought to be so refer'd in our Intention and Use, that in Swearing we neither make too little of them by Falshood or Levity, as if God were not in them, nor so much by Idolatry, as if they were Gods themselves. Some holier things, wherein the Divine Truth is more clearly manifested, if expresly terminated on God, (as St Paul *terminates the Rejoycing, by which he Sweares, in Christ Jesus*, 1. *Cor.* 15. 31.) may be used in a secondary way of Attestation; that God by Them may make the Truth appeare: but these, as well as other Creatures, are more properly cited in Cursing; and an Oath by any in-feriour Name, in the safest sense, is an *Imprecation*, that Divine Iudgement may be exercis'd on Falshood, through those things which we love and use. Saint *Paul*, in another place, joynes an *Attestation* and *Execration* under one

milar forme, *I call God for a Record upon my Soule*, 2. Cor. 1.23.v. I call God for a Record, there's the *Attestative* part, upon my Soule, there's the *Execrative*.

These wayes of assevering and establishing the Truth, though some of them be more liable to danger and suspition of abuse, (for which cause the Councell of *Carthage* punish'd a Clerke Swearing by the Creature) yet all, if rightly order'd, are allowable: but a right Oath by Gods owne Name, is not onely Lawfull, but Laudable and Religious; Laudable in the Iudgement of holy *David*, *Psal.* 63.12.v. *All they that sweare by him shall be commended*; Religious in the most generall esteeme of the Schoole: both because it proceedes from a good *Ground*, Faith in Gods *Omniscience* and *Infallibility*, and because it tends to a good *End* mentioned by the Apostle, *Heb.*6.16.v. namely the *End of Strife*; as in the making of Leagues, Promise of Allegiance, Trialls of Law, Compurgation of Fame, and the like. The Act it selfe, unlesse it want these necessary Relations, or miscarry in the manner, is Pious and Reverent. Wherefore the Scripture measures out the due Conditions, *Thou shalt sweare the Lord liveth, in Iudgement, in Truth, and in Righteousnesse*. *Ier.* 4.2. In Iudgement *Discreetly*, when the cause is found weighty, the doubt difficult, and an Oath necessary, That belongs to the *Person*; In Truth *Sincerely*, when the Matter is well knowne to be so, That belongs to the *Matter*; in Righteousnesse *Honestly*, that Iustice may be fulfilled, That belongs to the *End*. The *Rash* Swearer through want of *Iudgement* vilifies the Majesty of God, the *Perjur'd* through want of *Truth* calls him to witnesse a Lye, the *Wicked* through want of *Righteousnesse* useth him as a helper of Iniquity. And therefore where these are supposed to

to be wanting, as in Children not come to Discretion, and in Perjur'd men past Truth and Honesty, an Oath is by no meanes allowable. If onely the principall Condition be deficient, if an Oath *Assertory* be found to want *Truth*, or an Oath *Promissory* to want *Righteousnesse*, the one is *Invalid*, the other not *Obligatory*: Law shewes the first, and Conscience tells us concerning the second, that one Sinne cannot oblige us to commit another, nor a sinne in word to second it with a sinne in worke, for sinne ought to be broken off as soone as possibly it may. Wherefore *David* without scruple blesseth God and *Abigail*, for staying him in the prosecution of a rash and bloody Oath. 1. *Sam.* 25. *cap.* To whom should an injust Oath oblige us? to *God*, or to *Man*? whether it were taken Rashly in Error or Passion, whether it were taken violently by Coaction, or willingly with Deliberation, or mixtly betwixt Will and Force for Deliverance out of present trouble, yet if the Matter or End be unrighteous, or impedient to Charity, certainly it obliges not to God, because it was contrary to Gods will; which ought to take place of our owne, upon second and better Thoughts. Much lesse can it oblige to Man; especially when it is impos'd Fraudulently, or Compulsively, or without just Authority, because the Imposer deserves to be deceiv'd, and to beare the Imputation of that perjury which he obtruded on others. I grant, that since every Oath is of a binding Nature, it cannot but some way bind the Person in himselfe, either with a True Intention, or with Guilt of Perjurd collusion. For the Reverence due to Gods Name requires Truth of Intention; but when the Matter is unrighteous, Gods word forbids Execution; and when by *Satans* device, Gods Name is set up against Gods Word, and Truth against Rigteousnesse,

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no wonder if Intention and execution agree not; for as Truth carries the one, so the other is to be swayed by Righteousnesse. In this absurd opposition, which ought to be prevented by not Swearing, the Swearer is so intangled, that which way soever he turne, he is actually Perjur'd, by Swearing either what he intends not, or what he ought not to performe, but to falsifie, though he intended. And therefore since in this Case *Juramentum ligat non obligat*, since the unlawfull Oath binds the Conscience with Guilt of a bad Promise, though truly made, but not to more guilt of wicked Performance, it remaines that the Oath past be recalled by Repentance; hearty Repentance for shrinking under Gods Triall, for taking his Sacred Name in Vaine, and incurring a Denyall of him before Men. Now at length since a firme Oath must be joyntly held up with these holy Conditions, appointed by God, it selfe so upheld must needs be Holy. If rightly taken, 'tis a peice of *Religious worship*: and not without faire ground from other Scripture, *Thou shalt feare the Lord thy God, and serve him, and Sweare by his Name. Deut.* 6. 13. there Swearing is commanded, and plac'd as the next Neighbour to divine Service. For to give God the better, to end all Strife at the sound of his Name, as duely ascribing to him, all Power, Knowledge, and Truth, is to yeeld him Honour and Reverence. *For verily a Man sweareth by the Greater.* Heb. 6. 16. *per quem veneratur aut diligit*, by whom he honours or loves, saith St *Ierome*: an Oath (saith *Aristotle*) is most *Honourable* as being a Token of divinity; therefore *C. Caligula* ambitious of divine worship, publish'd an Edict throughout his Empire, that Men should accustome to sweare by his Name: likewise when *Demosthenes* swore by them that ventured their lives at *Marathon*,

Ierom. in Matth. 5.

Ar: 1. met.

Iosep. lib. 18.

...thon, μὰ τὸς ἐν Μαραθῶνι ἀμελεσθεύσαντας. as if the men ...d be Saincted for that Expedition, be stir'd up the ...its of his Citizens, more with that one word, then ...h his whole Oration besides. So then an Oath ap...es to be the badge of Reverence.

God hath not onely allow'd and commanded an Oath ...*Generall*, but expresly and carefully injoyn'd it in many ...*cular Cases*: As in case of *Theft*, Ex. 22. 11. *When ...ds intrusted miscarry, an Oath of the Lord shall be be...ne them, that he hath not put his hands to his Neigh...ne goods*: In case of Murder, Deut. 21. 6. v. *When a ...is slaine, all the Elders of the City next to the slaine shall ...their Hands over the Heifer, and they shall Testifie and ..., Our Hands have not shed this Blood, neither have our ...ye seen it, be mercifull, ô Lord*: In case of Adultery, Num. ...19. *If the Spirit of Iealousie come upon a Man, the Priest ...charge the Woman with an Oath*. According to the ...t of these Instances, are the Oathes of Supremacy, ...legiance, the Oath *ex officio* in spirituall Courts, and ...e Oathes in Temporall usually administer'd; for the ...rance of Fidelity and Truth. Likewise all sacred Con...ts betwixt God and us are tied with this Knot, Bap...e, Confirmation, Marriage, Consecration, Orders, ...wes, are all celebrated either with an Oath, or with ...t which is Equivalent, the Name of the Father, the ...ne, and the Holy Ghost. I could bring a lury of Ex...ples for godly Swearing: *Abraham* swore his servant, ...24. S. *Paul*, in divers Epistles; the *Angell* by him ...lives for ever. *Rev.* 10. *God* himselfe to *Abraham*. ...22. *By my selfe I have sworne* saith the Lord. If ...e be any force in Examples, these above all others are ...t prevalent.

Dem: ἐν τῷ περὶ στεφ:

all Swearing but the reputed Enemies of Obedience, Despisers of Order, Friends to Lying and Hypocrisie, who having now gotten some power into their hands are become the greatest Exacters of Swearing. Whereby it is the more evident, that Judicial Swearing is of necessary use.

The chiefest Objection against all Oathes is drawne from the words before my Text, *ye have heard it said, Thou shalt not forsweare, but shalt perform* (or *render*) *to the Lord thine Oathes: but I say unto you, Sweare not at all, neither by Heaven for it is Gods Throne, nor by that which* followes. To answer this, the Scope of the Context must be exactly weighed. The Jewes, by Pharisaicall Traditions, or wicked practice, understood the places of * Scripture summ'd up by our Saviour, to be first a Prohibition of Swearing *falsly*, by Gods Name *onely*; secondly an allowance of Swearing by Gods Name *Truely*. False Swearing by the name of Creatures they did not esteeme Perjury, True Swearing by the Name of God, though needlesse, they did not esteeme unlawfull, whereas the same Scripture which forbids *to sweare by his Name Falsly*, forbids also *to Prophane his Name*, *Lev.* 19. 12. *v.* according to the sense of the third Commandement, *Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in Vaine*, for *Vaine* includes both False and needlesse: and against the same Scripture which allows Swearing by his great Name, interdicts the Name of others. *Deut.* 6. 13. *v. Thou shalt sweare by his Name, and ye shall not goe after other Gods.* Wherefore that corrupt Interpretation Christ clearly purges, and in one word perfects the Law, *Sweare not at all.* As he that speakes not at all cannot Lye, so he that sweares not at all cannot Forsweare, nor offend in the manner, saith S. *Bernard.* So then

* Lev. 19. 12. Deut. 6. 13. Num. 30. 2.

Bern. de Perjurio.

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with one blow Christ cuts of foure Obliquities, not one. *Perjury*, but all *Light* Swearing by the Name of *God*, not only *Idolatrous*, but all *Dreadfull* Swearing by the Name of *Creatures*: for Christ shewes that every Oath by the Creature is terminated in God, and that every Oath by him, whether direct or indirect, especially in Communication, commeth of Evill. This word *Communication* being considered together with the occasion of this Precept, shewes how the Precept, *Swear not at all*, is to be understood, that is, not to swear as in vain or lies, not without necessity. 'Tis the Judgement of *Calvin*, as well as others, that our Saviour bars not the *substance* of Swearing but the *manner*, not in all *Cases* but under all *Formes in Communication*: the Originall is not μὴ, in no Case, but μὴ ὅλως, not at all generally, whether *True* or *False*, in reference to the words preceding, but how? not *irreverently in Communication*, as appeares by the words following; not at all *Vainely* under any *Forme* whatsoever, as he further illustrates this generall Prohibition, *neither by God nor the Creature*, since he that sweares by the Creature sweares by God also, which was not duely considered. Wherefore *Calvin* grants the generall substance to be also prohibited, as it stands *Naked*, for so it becomes irreverent; but as it stands *invested with due Circumstance*, whereby it becomes necessary, so he construes it lawfull. *Luther* hath well endeavour'd to clear this point, by comparing Christs Sermon together with his Auditors; here he instructs not the *Magistrate*, but the *People*, and divers things are unfit for them in their owne Persons, which may become fit under the Magistrates command: wherefore this Prohibition of Swearing is to be understood like that of Anger and Killing: neither of them is permitted to

the Communalty, nor to the Magistrate himselfe in common businesse, but as them that are called; and when they are called to the work of Iustice: so that ordinarily the safe way is here prescribed; be not Angry at all, Sweare not at all; not of your owne wills, not in your triviall affaires, but onely when you are not your selves, when God through the Power of the Magistrate, or the necessity of the Cause, according to Iustice or Charity, shall call you. For then your anger is Gods anger not yours, and likewise your Oath not yours but Gods. As killing without Circumstance is forbidden, so Swearing with Circumstance is commanded, but as there the conditionall Negative is reduceable to a Positive, so here the conditionall Positive is reduced to a Negative, yet both these Acts with due Condition are serviceable unto God. So then the use of an Oath is not forbidden, but the Vanity wherein consists the abuse.

If it be utterly unlawfull to pronounce the Name of the Almighty, why hath he then a Name? how shall we praise him, or pray unto him? If it be objected that an Oath is not *absolutely* directed to *Gods worship*, but *respectively*, as aymed at the clearing of Truth for *humane benefit*: the like may be said of *Prayer*, that it aymes at our owne Protection and Well-fare, yet the Benefit expected abates not the Religious Reverence performed in either. For the Beneficiall Result of Divine Attestation, (which *Caietan* disdaines to call the End as being lesse Noble then the meanes) is but Extrinsecall and Appendant to the Essence of Swearing, which rather consists in the Religious Reverence of Divine Attestation, and the dignity of the Person so elevates the Iniunction of his Testimony, that we ought to be more taken up with performance of due Re-

Cajet. in Thom. 2a. 2æ. Q. 89. Ar. 5.

verence

science thereto belonging, then with expectation of the benefit ensuing; as also in Prayer, whatsoever our desires are, we submit them to the overruling will of God. Doth Prayer referre all things to his Glory? So likewise the last and principall fruit of an Oath, to which it may be Piously ordein'd, is the Glory of God, arising from the ending of humane Controversie. And then what hinders but Humane Benefit may subordinatly consist with Gods glory, as well in the act of man as in the Act of God? God sent his Son a Ransome for Man, a Price infinitely beyond the Purchase, and a means immeasurably beyond the End; yet not unfitly or Gloriously, because the Salvation of Man tends lastly to the glory of God. So when divine Testimony is rightly called to be the meanes of Concord betwixt Men, 'tis not called Irreligiously, or but Carnally, because this Citation of Gods Name, both begins with Reverence, and concludes with his Glory.

So much for this Point; wherein you have heard, that by reason of humane Infirmities, mendacity and Incredulity, an Oath in weighty cases not otherwise to be clear'd, is allowable; of what kind soever it be; whether Assertory or Promissory, simply Attestating or Execrating, by the proper Name of God, or by his Might in the Creature; because an Oath having a good Ground, Faith in Gods Excellence, and a good end, decision of doubtfull Strife, being also accompanied with requisite Conditions, Judgement, Truth, and Righteousnesse, without which it cannot stand firme, redounds to Gods Honour and worship, by attributing unto him undeniable Authority, universality of Knowledge, and Infallibility of Truth. That God hath in divers Cases both allowed and commanded Swearing, and that his Saints, his Apostle, his Angell,

and himselfe have practised the same: that the absolute Rejecters of Swearing, who now for advantage are turn'd Exactors thereof, are men of more then suspected integrity; that the generall prohibition of all Oathes, before my Text, extends not to the substance of Swearing but the irreverent manner, or not to the substance invested with due Circumstance, but as it stands naked, and so forbids it not in all Cases before a Magistrate, but under all Formes in Communication: that an Oath taken with exact care of Reverence, and all attending Conditions, doth not onely serve our selves, but God in chiefe. So from establishing the use of an Oath, I proceed to cut off the abuse, by the Limitation of your Talke in my next poynt. *Let your Communication be yea yea, and nay nay.*

Not your Deposition, your Sanction or Confirmation, not your Evidence or Testimony, but your Communication: λόγος signifies Speech or Discourse, and so the sense is, *Let your Talke or mutuall Communication be no more then barely Affirmative or Negative.*

Now for the doubling of *yea* and *nay*, many Conjectures may be yeelded: It may beare a Relation to the Persons conferring, let such Limitation of Talke be mutuall, or a Relation to the matter spoken of, *quod affirmandum affirma, quod negandum nega,* (saith Cajetan) if the matter be so, so say, if otherwise, say no: or since Truth hath a threefold Residence, Objectively in the matter, Formally in the mind, Representatively in words, and since Truth of words should carry a double Conformity, with mind and matter, therefore yea is doubled; yea yea for Heart and Tongue, for Word and Deed; and so there will be no need of an Oath. Or rather the second yea is added to stint the former, and to exclude Swearing, let your Affir-

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mation be meerly Affirmative, *Let your yea be yea, and your nay be nay*, according to S. *James*. c. 5. 12. v. or lastly, to strengthen the Asseveration, as *Pharaoh's* Dreame was assured by doubling it; and as the practice of our Saviour shewes, *Amen Amen, Verily Verily I say unto you.*

Pure Affirmation and Negation without the staring Embroydery of Oathes is sufficient for Common discourse, because things familiarly spoken are either credible of themselves, or else have no absolute necessity of credence. Where nothing more then Affirmation is necessary, why should more be strain'd. To lift a Feather with both hands and with strong Engines, to hoot a lowd where a whisper is better heard, is it not ridiculous?

If frequent Lying had not begot a just Incredulity, I see not why an hearty Asseveration might not supply the place of an Oath, even in the weightiest matters, and then the Lyar might be esteemed and censured no otherwise then now the Perjur'd: the same Figure put in a higher place carries ten times more Value: so we find that the bare word of an approved honest man passeth for an Oath, so should the word of a Priest by the Credit of his Profession, and the word of a Peere by the vertuous Estimation of his Honour. The *Essens* (saith *Iosephus*) *accounted him a Convict Liar, whose word would not passe without the sanctifying of God.* We never find that our Saviour swore at all, though he uttered things of greatest consequence: for indeed his works did sufficiently confirme his words: Mans voyce passeth through the Eare onely, but Gods through the Eye also; as *Philo* observes out of the 20. of *Exod.* where *the People is said to have seen the Object of the Eare, you so have seen the noyse of the Trumpet*, the like we read in the second of *Iev.* v. 31. *O Generation see the word*

Philo de Decalogo.

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of the Lord. Grant me therefore a Heart transparent in word, Reall Truth conformable to the Divine Patterne, let these grow habituall amongst us, then me thinkes all our businesse may well be transacted without such straining of Credit. Or if a *single* Affirmation will not suffice, let it be *doubled*, as here in my Text; two yeas may stand for an Oath, two nayes for an Execration: especially when the Forme hath beene recommended by our Saviour. Doubtlesse this is the way of Perfection, pointed out by his Instruction, to them that desire it: Christ would have his so simple, as not to *Deceive*, so Candid, as not to *distrust*. St *Ierome* is bold to affirme *that Swearing by Gods Name was allowed to the Iewes as to Children, and no otherwise then the use of Sacrifice, to prevent Idolatry; that the Stature of Evangelicall Truth will not owne it, since every word of the Faithfull ought to weigh with an Oath.*

Howsoever, though the malignity of the world require, that in arduous affaires of inextricable doubt, an Oath be still indulg'd; yet let us use this our Priviledge modestly, let us honour God in this our weaknesse, let not the use of his Name descend to obvious and familiar Communication; there a double yea is superabundant: no Colour, no Pretext for more there: an Oath there taken destroyes the End for which it is allowed, and instead of Credence begets more Incredulity, more suspition: because the *Bond of Confirmation* is so cheaply esteemed.

Swearing was never commanded *Absolutely*, but either *Comparatively* that men might rather sweare by the *True* God then by a *False*, or *Respectively* out of urgent necessity, or *Circumstantially* with due Conditions: And therefore though it may be good *in it selfe*, 'tis not good *for it selfe*, not good like *Health* but like *Physick*, which may be

be used for *Necessity*, but ought not to be desired and frequented because of the *Danger*. If an Oath be but Physick for Incredulity, take heed to thy selfe; for Physick swallowed without a Cause breedes sicknesse. *Above all things Sweare not* (saith S. *Iames*) *least ye fall into Condemnation*, least easinesse of Swearing bring a habit, the habit continuance, continuance Perjury, and these eternall Malediction. What saith S. *Austin? Falsa Iuratio est Impia, vera est Periculosa, nulla est Secura*, False Swearing is Impious, True is Dangerous, none at all is Secure. Though Danger be not considerable in case of necessity, yet beware least the past Act of necessity dispose thee to habit. Things not Absolutely, but Occasionally good, ought to be used *Rarely*, and with ponder'd Circumstance. To execute an Offender is Lawfull, but not to kill on particular pleasure, or in Passion: Though an Oath may be taken Religiously and safely, as occasion shall require, yet commonly to hurle it forth, is most *Irreligious*, and therefore most *Banefull*. Cap. 5.

That it is most Irreligious, will some appeare. Familiarity betwixt unequalls takes of respect, whensoever it is challeng'd, and things most glorious are soyld by ordinary use; so is the name of the Almighty; it looses its due Reverence by obvious usurpation, insomuch that it failes of its binding vertue in matters of weight.

Whatsoever is *Sacred* on earth is *shut up* and abstracted from Community. Whats the holinesse of the *Lords day?* a separation from all worke but only His Service, any other worke prophanes it. Whats the holinesse of the *Lords Place* or Church? a separation from all use but His; any other use, as walking, or idle communing, especially in time of Divine Service, this as well as Merchandise, pro-

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phanes it. What's the holineſſe of *God's name*, which is nearer unto him then either of theſe, and ſhall indure when theſe are gone? a ſeparation from common diſcourſe, all ſpeech but ſacred and Neceſſary prophanes it. Then waſh thy mouth with teares from thine Eye, for polluting his Holy and Reverend Name with vaine Appellation.

St *Paules* Atteſtation in his Epiſtles gives no example to common ſwearing; his matter is not ſo light as our Communication, neither is the Pen ſo raſh, as the Tongue, *Scribentis conſideratio cautior non habet linguam præcipitem* (ſaith *Aquinas*,) the conſideration of the wary writer prunes off all headlong Expreſſions incident to talke, ſo that the Apoſtles Oath is not the zeale of *Folly* but of *Vnderſtanding*.

Thom. 2a 2æ. Q. 89. Ar. 2.

'Tis eaſily obſervable, that we ſcarce name our friends or earthly ſuperiours without a formall reſpect, ſometimes we move the Hat, and ſometimes we put it off, then to uſe the name of God unneceſſarily and Irreverently is as much as to ſay, God is neither our *Friend* nor *Superiour*. O wretched diſreſpect, where the Proportion of Honour due is infinitely greater: would the Swearing Lord, or forſwearing Gallant, take it well himſelfe, to be lightly talk'd of, to be call'd *Dick* or *Tom* by a rude peſant? if ſuch language be ſawcy and ruſtick concerning himſelfe, how preſumptuous and prophane is his owne touching the Lord of Lords?

But an Oath is more then the bare *Naming* of God, it calls him to *witneſſe*, a buſineſſe not light, howſoever vilified through Cuſtome, but of dreadfull weight. The Supreme Iudge of all Gods and People is called from his Throne to become a witneſſe; he is ſummoned by his Providence to declare the Truth; if not preſently, yet

(as surely he will) to doe it hereafter, and to execute *judgement* on the Falsifier.

To cite an ordinary honest man, or call him into *publick* for proof of a frivolous matter, perhaps a false one, is very discourteous and unfriendly: What is it then to cite thy God for nothing but an empty phrase, a noyse of no substance, a thing more worthy to be false then true, some foolish vanity or filthy Act. Reduce an Oath to the value of its meaning; and then consider how absonous it would sound, though God were thy Vassall or Underling: Goe to thy Slave, and say thus unto him; Lend me thy hand in this Folly, or in this mischiefe; for my sake doe this piece of Injustice, and break a brace of Commandements, the third by Swearing, and the ninth by false witnesse: will not thy Slave start back as from a Fiend or Monster? yet thus in effect thou invokest thy God; Lord strengthen my words with false witnesse, cover my shame by colouring my Falshood; thou, my God, steward my Cosenage, and hide it under the shadow of thy Name, from thine owne Eye, and the Eye of man; serve the way of thy worme thou that art infinite, and of thy goodnesse further my sinne. Art thou ashamed thus to bespeake thy Vassall, and hast thou no Regard of thy Heavenly Lord and Father? what thinkest thou? doest thou beleeve he heares thee, and is every where present? if so, how *impudent* is thy Brow? if not, how *Atheisticall* is thy mind? Stay stay, thou needest not call him, he is too neare already, so neare that he stands betwixt the Lips which thou openest and shuttest with an Oath.

O shameless practice, that God should be mentioned more in *Oathes* then in *Prayers*, or in those immediately after these; that the *Creed* should be runne over in such

horrible Confession; that our *Religion* should most appeare in our *Sinne*, our *Faith* in the worke of *Infidelity*. No sooner we come from Church, where we bow at the glorious Name of *Iesus*, but we may heare a mouth fling it out with lesse heed then spittle, careleſſe how it goes, or where it lights; we may heare him torne and rack'd againe in every part, worse then Iewishly, because to no End at all; his wounds are ript up, his heart melts, his blood runnes out, his feet are nailed, all his Passion is repeated; and for no mans good, but the Speakers meere Condemnation.

To bridle the mouth, and keep it from such rude sinne, first ponder your words before you garnish them with Oathes, weigh them like Gold in the Ballance; consider whereto they tend; understand your owne meaning, before you lash out with your Tongue; for a Birth deliver'd before it is Conceiv'd must needs be monstrous; and better be dumbe, then speake that which ought to be recall'd. By thus brideling the mouth in the *matter* of Speech, your heat and folly will be throughly quell'd in the *manner*; when you take care to speake *Wisely*, *Truely*, and *Honestly*, you will be quite taken off from speaking *Irreligiously*. If Opposition tempt thee to Sweare, doe not onely examine how great the matter is, how true, how well understood; but in what case and temper you are; how pure in Body, how pure in Soule; before what Company, at what Time, in what Place, with what Reverence, to what End you Sweare. If still the Name of God run hastily on thy Tongue, marke how an Oath becomes *another*, (for some learne better by Example of Vice then by the Rule of Vertue, because it is easier to observe the Faults of others then their owne Duties) marke how there it sounds, and then reflect on *thy selfe*. Remember also, that He by

 whom

whom thou Sweareſt, as he is *ever preſent*, ſo he is likewiſe *Omnipotent*, able to turne thee inſtantly into the Curſe which thou uttereſt, or into the Ayre which thou breatheſt in Swearing.

To ſumme up this Poynt, you have heard that a bare Aſſertion or at leaſt a double one, where there is no neceſſity of Credence, as in common talke, is full ſufficient; that if Lying were laid aſide, the weightieſt matters would need no Swearing, and that ſuch ſingleneſſe of Speech would come neareſt to Chriſtian Perfection; that albeit ſome Caſes may require a Toleration, yet in ſlight diſcourſe, an Oath is without colour, not without great prejudice: that being not abſolutely but reſpectively good, like medicinall help reſerv'd for neceſſity, it proves dangerous and pernicious, if uſed wantonly: that alſo it looſeth its Majeſty and Vertue by unſeaſonable uſe, and that nothing is Sacred unleſſe it be ſecluded; that S. *Paul* is no patterne for common Swearers; that to reverence the Name of a Friend, and yet to prophane the Name of God, is great Inequality; that God is not onely named in vayne by familiar Oathes, but cited as a witneſſe and Iudge; and moſt Injuriouſly to no purpoſe, yea worſe then none; never man ſo uſed: that Swearing is ſtrangely turned to a Map of Religion; that for a reſtrayning Remedy, ſuſpenſion of words, Conſideration of Circumſtance, obſervation of others, Remembrance of Divine Preſence and Omnipotence ought to be interpoſed. To pull the reignes yet ſtricter, let me paſſe to my laſt Poynt, the Reaſon here given of this Reſtriction, becauſe *whatſoever is more then yea and nay is of Evill.*

Not whatſoever is more by Addition of any *pure Affirmative*, ſuch as our Saviour uſed, but whatſoever is

more by Superaddition of *Divine Testimony* is of Evill.

Not alwayes Evill *it selfe* (unlesse in Communication) but *of Evill* howsoever, (as divers observe:) the same Reason which insinuates that an Oath is tolerable in some Cases, shewes that in all Cases 'tis occasioned from Evill. *Dum jurare cogeris, scies ex Infirmitate eorum venire quibus aliquid suades, quæ utiq; Infirmitas malum est*, saith S. *Austin*; Indeed the aptitude of Lying in the Speaker as well as hardnesse of Beliefe in the hearer, which must needs call for an Oath to reconcile them, are both Evills of humane Infirmity, the one is *malum Culpæ* and the other is *malum Pœnæ*. Now though it follow not, that whatsoever is occasioned from Evill is Evill too, since good medicines are occasioned from bad Diseases, and Swearing is most tolerable when it is most urged by Incredulity, yet this will follow, that because Swearing is but occasionally good, and upon bad occasion too, therefore it is not to be affected nor used without necessity.

Whatsoever is more, more then yea yea in Communication, is of the *Evill One*, so *Theophylact* understands it, and not unfitly: for we read not ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ but ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ, which word, with the Article prefixt, is an usuall appellation of the *Divell*; and the Devill, rightly denominated *De Evill*, is the subtile suggester of all Spirituall mischiefe; especially of common Swearing. Would you know where his Cunning is most *evidently Operative?* First, where is no *Inclination by Nature*, where neither *Pleasure* nor *Profit*, the baytes of the *Flesh* and the *World* invite us to a Sin, as neither inviteth us to common Swearing, that Sin plainly proceedes from the *Devill*. Secondly, where from things *usefull* Evill is contracted, or from *unconsidered beginnings* not apparently dangerous, not

presently

presently banefull, *horrible Consequents* grow in the End, as from *rare* Swearing by God, or *petty* but *common* Swearing by Creatures, there he is busie. Thirdly, where the Consequents are most suitable to the Devills maine *Intentions*, the *Dishonour of God* and the *Breach of Humane Society*, there he hath been shrewdly working: now common Swearing serves him in both these, by making the Name of God familiar, and the Bond of Truth disesteemed and suspected: by such worke, you may soon discerne the worker. Now God deliver the wretched Sinner, who under the sacred sound of Gods Name, hath the Devill so strong on his Tongue.

When the Tempter hath once entered his Disciples into a veine of swearing, it flowes from their own *Evill Condition* too, most grosly and variously.

First, from *Irreverence* of God, whose Excellence and infinite Majesty we doe not seriously consider. The Meditation of his greatnesse seldome sinkes into our hearts, and therefore his Name is so familiar on our *Tongues*.

Also from *Inadvertence*; we call on God with lesse intention then we call a Boy; we name him heedlesly, as we touch the face or stirre our hayre, not mindeing what we doe. Or in a nearer similitude, we sweare by him as we pray unto him, with one knee, or a knee halfe bowd, with one Elbow, a sleepy Head and a wandring Thought, least regarding that only thing which we are about. Thus through custome our sinnes passe by Vs, like house-hold people, without observance.

Also it comes from *much Idle talking*; the Torrent of speech carries Oathes along with it, as a violent streame beares downe Trees and Trash.

Especially, where is *want of Literature*: he that loves

to hear his owne ſound, through barrennes of cleanly expreſsion is forced to fill the gap of his ſpeech with prophanation, and to ſwell his phraſe with lofty Oathes, a peice of Rhetorick learnt from the Divell.

Alſo it much prevailes through *want of breeding*: for they who are brought up to ſpeak with Reverence and advice in their youth, will not be ſo raſh of Tongue in their Age. If ſwearing Royſters had ever duly regarded their Parents (unleſſe their Parents were as bad) they would ſhew more Reverence to their heavenly Father.

Alſo it flowes from *Lying*, which ſeekes to deceive by the ſacred bond of *Credit*. *Swearing* and *Lying* are joyned together by the Prophet *Hoſea*, c. 4. v. 2. Therefore I wonder how valiant *Souldiers*, who moſt deteſt the *Imputation of Lying*, ſhould give ſuch ſuſpicion thereof by *unbridled Swearing*. When the Lord of Hoſts led forth his people to War, the Camp was not onely the ſchoole of holineſſe, (*When the Hoſt goeth forth againſt thine enemies then keep thee from every wicked thing*) but alſo the Schoole of Cleanlineſſe, *Thou ſhalt have a Paddle upon thy Weapon, when thou wilt eaſe thy ſelfe abroad, thou ſhalt digge therewith, and ſhalt turne back and cover that which commeth from thee, for the Lord thy God walketh in the midſt of thy Camp to deliver thee, therefore ſhall thy Camp be holy that he ſee no uncleane thing in thee*, Deut. 23. 9. Shall there now be leſſe care of keeping the *mouth* cleane, then once of covering *Excrements*, leſſe reſpect now of *God himſelfe*, then once of the *Ground* under foot? conſidering the fouleneſſe of the *Sin*, how I pitty the poore *Sinner*, who being likely to come to a preſent account of *idle words*, cares not though his laſt breath be ſpent in *Swearing*.

Deut. 23. 9.

But there are more Cauſes of Swearing, and more incident to Souldiers then Lying: for it comes alſo from *Vaine Glory*, Some thinke it a gallant grace to ſend out a Volly of Oathes roundly, loudly, and boldly; as if they durſt crack againſt the Thunderer, and brave God to his face. O ſimple! this is Mettle.

Alſo from *untamed Paſſion*; as a Dogge being ſtruck bites a Stone, or any thing that is next; ſo a man that gives scope to his Fury, wrecks it on the higheſt, and barkes againſt his Maker.

But moſt of all, it comes of *ill habit*; through which mens Tongues are not their owne, but the Tongues of Cuſtome, and have gotten words which will have vent in ſpite of the mind.

Now if Swearing proceed from ſo much Evill, how Evill muſt it be in *it ſelfe*? be not deceived; the greatneſſe of a ſin is not to be meaſured by the preſent *Puniſhment*, but by the *Object* againſt which it ſtrikes, and by the *manner* of violation. *Theft* is more puniſhed then *Adultery*, yet the latter is the greater ſin, becauſe it offends a Neighbour in a greater matter, and more nearly; for the Body is more and nearer then Goods; but the Name of God is more then both. I know, the Adulterer cries out againſt the poore Filcher; and the greater Thiefe, whilſt he glories in his owne ſhame, condemnes the leſſe: why? becauſe the one is hanged, the other onely mulct; ſo the Swearer feeling little or no preſent puniſhment, is inſenſible of his Crime: but to ſpeake Truth, the ſin in it ſelfe is worſe then any Sin whatſoever againſt our Neighbour, becauſe it highly offends God himſelfe. Worſe and greater it is in a *generall Reſpect of the Perſon offended*, though leſſe perhaps in the *ſpeciall manner of offending*, becauſe it

proceeds from lesse Atrocity of mind, and with lesse damage to the Party, then Murder and some other sin. But if Christ, who now sits at the right hand of God, were as capable of killing, as of hearing his Passion repeated; Swearing would prove a *Murder worse then Murder:* if the Spouse of Christ could as easily be corrupted as scandal'd with bad example, Swearing would prove an *Adultery worse then Adultery*: if God could be as soon robbed of his Heavenly Glory as of his Honour before men, Swearing would prove a *Robbery worse then the utmost Plunder*. As it is, it stands parallell in the same degree of Opposition against *God*, as False witnesse or Calumny against *Man*, because it calls God to *witnesse a Falshood*, and *Calumniates* his Name. Let me proceed further; since the Name of God is nearer unto him then the Day or Place of his worship, (for the Place is appointed for the Day, and both for the Honour of his Name) therefore prophane Swearing is worse then either *Sacriledge* or *Breach of the Sabboth*. In a word, 'tis next to *Idolatry*, I may call it for nearnesse sake Θεοιδολοπόια, for as Idolatry makes an *Idoll God*, so this makes *God an Idoll*, one that hath Eares and heares not. And I may adde this concerning the *manner*, that it is acted with more *Impudence* then any other sin whatsoever, and is most properly a *Loud and Crying* sin, because it provokes God, not *secretly* and *obliquely*, but *openly* and *directly*, with loud Prophanation to his Face. Then how many great offences are committed in this one, yet how often is this committed in one Day, by divers Persons, in one City? It is meerly from Gods *Impassibility*, that he receaves not such *hurt* by sin as man doth; it is therefore his *Mercy* not our *Innocence*, that suddaine *Vengeance* doth not follow, that we are not swal-

lowed

owed up quick in a moment. Leſſer faults then This, icking of Sticks on the Sabboth, touching of the Arke ith unwarrantable hands, ſacrificing with unhallowed re, have been puniſhed with preſent death, ſo may this be oo. What meanes St *Iames*, when he ſaith, *Above all things, my Brethren, Sweare not.* Above all reſpect of *Creatures?* or above all things mentioned *in his Epiſtle?* above all things contained in that *Paragraph of Patience?* whatſoever he meanes, he certainly ſhewes thereby he *heinouſneſſe* of the ſin, which is growne ſo common mongſt us.

Yet as great and as common as the ſin is, it hath leſſe emptation then any other. Profit or Pleaſure hires or llures men to other Tranſgreſſions; if one dram of either found in thy whole Phraſebooke of Swearing, Sweare ntinually. What hath bewitch'd, who hath bedevil'd ou? *Nemo malus gratis*, no man does the worke of ſin thout ſome wages; this elſewhere is a true ſaying; one- in the Swearer it failes; which highly aggravates the ufulneſſe, the madneſſe, of this baiteleſſe booteleſſe ſin, ainely bent.

This ſore Evill, which comes from much Evill, is alſo nifull *in begetting more Evill*: for things produce as ey are produced; Every Bird layes an Egge, like that, which ſhe was hatched: I can but name thoſe Evills, d ſo drive to Concluſion.

It begets *publick diſreſpect of God*: Familiarity breeds ontempt, heedleſſe Swearing will make an Oath ſeeme thing, and God as little.

It breeds *Incredulity amongſt men*: who will beleeve mans word, who makes ſo light of his Oath? Then r the *loſſe of Credit*, it produces a *deſperate Impudence*

of Lying, as careleſſe of Truth, as hopeleſſe of Beliefe.

Ar: Eth: l. 4. c. 8. It gives offence to all Chriſtian Hearers with greateſt *Incivility*. *Ariſtotle* names two Vices oppoſite to *Vrbanity*, Swearing and Clowniſhneſſe; whereof the firſt offends in *Exceſſe*, and is therefore *exceſſively uncivill*; for it drives the Hearer to this ſtreight, either to reprove the Speaker, or to ſuppreſſe his zeale for God. What Company can indure to heare a man, I ſay a man, openly ſlighted, whom they all honour? then with what patience their onely God? how can any that are well affected to the Name of *Ieſus*, to which all give Reverence before meat heare it diſhonoured in the mid'ſt of Eating? Or why may not then a Pious Chriſtian put off his Hat without Irony, to give it honour in the inſtant of ſuch diſhonour.

I forbeare to ſhew what *ill Example* it gives to *young Children*; who underſtanding but few words, can oneh beare away thoſe, which they heare moſt frequent.

And how it hinders the *Iewes Converſion*, when he finds thoſe two ſins, which he moſt abhorres, ſo predominant in the Chriſtian, Idolatry and Swearing.

Shall ſo much *Evill of ſin* eſcape the *Evill of Puniſhment? I will be a ſwift witneſſe* (ſaith God) *againſt the falſe Swearers*, *Mal.* 3. 5. He that hath been ſo often called to witneſſe, will come at length with a witneſſe indeed. *Every one that Sweareth ſhall be cut off*, *Zec.* 5. 3. God forth abuſe of *his Name* will root out *thy Name, and deſtroy thy Houſe*, ſo that thy Heire and it ſhall be turned to one Rubbiſh. For certainty whereof, unleſſe ye Repent, I refer you to that Prophets *Flying Roll*; ſees your Phanſie nothing? the flying roll; *the length whereof is twenty Cubits and the breadth ten Cubits. This is the Curſe that goeth forth over the Face of the whole Earth. I will bring it forth* (ſaith

(saith the Lord) it shall enter into the house of him that Sweareth falsely by my Name (as the common Swearer is apt to sweare falsely) *and it shall remaine in the midst of his house; and it shall consume it with the Timber thereof and the Stones thereof*; and then what shall become of the Family?

After all this, we are not sure that the anger of God will be turned away; his hand may be stretched out still: for since *publick dishonour* is done to his Name by common Swearing, scarce or not scarce punished, how shall he rest satisfied with *private Vengeance?* As the whole *Body* doth often smart for the *Tongue*, so may a generall *Society* for some *Evill Speakers*; especially if their Speech sound *Treason*; but if Treason against *the King of Kings*, how great Vengeance may justly be feared by the whole *State?* one prophane *Achan* indangered a whole Army; *and because of Swearing the Land mourneth, Ier.* 23. 10. *v.* Behold, since Punishment followeth in that wherein we offend, *Voluntary Swearing* is now turned to a *Compulsive Forswearing*, to a blind Covenant against knowne Religion and Duty, against Conscience and Publick Safety, quite contrary to former Oathes of Allegiance and Supremacy, uncapable of keeping Faith on either side without Faith-breaking, as farre from Truth and Righteousnesse, as from all liberty and use of Iudgement: and therefore (as I have formerly shewed in generall) neither Obligatory to God, nor man; not through Excuse of Rashnesse, weakenesse, Ignorance, Compulsion, not through benefit of Equivocation, mentall Reservation, private Construction, inward Gainsaying, (for none can be bettered by his fault) but through the monstrous Irregularity and horrid viciousnesse of it selfe; null by Nature; advantagious to none but *Satan*, no way usefull to any End, but

meerly to deſtruction of Soules by taking it, or accidentally to a Crowne of Martyrdome by refuſing it. They that being unequall to ſo high a pitch of Sanctity, have ſubmitted themſelves to take it, I inquire not through what deficience, are howſoever no more bound to keep it, then *Peter* was bound to deny his Maſter for ever, becauſe he had once denied him with an Oath. Indeed it obliges them to that which the Impoſer leaſt deſires, to *Peter like Teares of Repentance*, to abundance of bitter ſorrow according to the great abſurdity of the Crime admitted, and particularly to this kind of amendment, never to ſweare againe without urgent neceſſity in a juſt Cauſe: leaſt all the Evill, which God hath threatned, be powred out upon them, and on all guilty Families, and for their ſakes on the whole State.

You have heard how Swearing comes not onely from ſome Evill Infirmities, but from the Devill, and from abundance of Evill Vices, how Evill it is in it ſelfe, how much Evill it produces, and with what Evill it ſhall be puniſhed. Now for Concluſion.

2a.2æ.Q.89. Ar: 2. *Aquinas* hath likened an *Oath* to the *Sacrament*, (for *Sacramentum* ſignifies both) I wiſh we tooke the one more ſeldome, and the other more often: the likeneſſe conſiſts in this, that both are intended for our good, but being ill-handled they become Engines of Deſtruction. See the words of S. *Paul* concerning the Sacrament, *Cor.*1.11.27. *Whoſoever ſhall eate this Bread, and drink this Cup of the Lord unworthily ſhall be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord: but let a man examine himſelfe, and ſo let him eat of that Bread and drink of that Cup: for he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh Damnation to himſelfe, not diſcerning the Lords Body.* The ſame will ſerve

ſerve for an Oath. Whoſoever ſhall take this Name in Vaine ſhall be guilty of the Majeſty of the Lord; but let a man examine himſelfe and the Cauſe, and ſo let him take this Name; for he that taketh it in Vaine or unworthily, pronounceth his owne Damnation, not diſcerning the Majeſty and Preſence of the Lord. The Apoſtle for his part had good ſucceſſe; for by writing theſe words, he quite rooted out a grievous Sin, never heard of ſince, namely *Feaſting at the time of Communion in the Church:* Swearing at the time of merriment in the houſe is much like it: how hath holineſſe been mixt with madneſſe in both! Grant me then (O Lord) the like ſucceſſe by applying the ſame words, that the Cuſtome of Swearing be never more prevalent amongſt us. Grant it ô mighty Lord, that through Reverence of thy Name, we may grow up to Feare of thy greatneſſe, and through Feare of thy greatneſſe we may proceed to Love of thy goodneſſe; and then through Love of Thee we may come to Ioy and Reſt in Thee, through Ieſus Chriſt our Lord. To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghoſt be all Honour, Praiſe, and Glory, now and for evermore. *Amen.*

FINIS.